

(compels my hands to do) The Things My Heart Wouldn't Dare by thecopperkid

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Summary:

“So do it,” he says, daring him, and the words feel familiar because he’s said this before — but this time he’s not sure which one he means.

Hit him? Kiss him?

He leaves the choice up to Billy, purposefully ambiguous, because he almost can’t figure out what would feel more satisfying.

It’s not a shock to Steve that Billy acts on the latter — but with the force, the aggression, the desperation he uses to do so, Billy might as well have just laid Steve out, punched him black and blue.

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When Billy's dad threatens to pull him out of Fiji, Billy's a wreck — but Steve's there with a big, empty house, a bottle of Patron and some latent bisexuality.

Or, Billy finds Steve's sex playlist and gives him head like he's never gotten in his goddamn life.

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Author's Note:

Title from Little Joy's "With Strangers."

It shouldn't surprise Steve that Billy's body has no concept of a refractory period, but nevertheless he *is surprised*, dumb as ever, when Billy slides out of one Nike and stretches his leg out underneath the booth so his foot rubs over Steve's dick, testing.

The stark staccato pluck of a sanshin piped in through the speakers somehow makes this more awkward.

How is Billy still ready to fucking go?

He'd been grumbling the *whole* way to the Chinese place, all, "why'd you have to go and babysit the brats, Harrington, it was s'posed to be just *us* " but he suddenly perks up a great deal when the waitress sets the Scorpion bowl between them.

And that?

The stupid drink with the umbrella and cherries and oranges bobbing about in the peachy bottom-shelf house liquor, *that's* what earns Steve the sly attention under the table, he guesses. The thing about understanding Billy; you'd need a psychology degree to figure out what's going on in his head emotionally, but at the same time, he's easy. Give him some fucking booze and he's contented and pliable.

But it's like, they're *right in front* of the kids, and Jonathan and Nancy, who'd sacrificed their night back home to bring the whole squad to the drive-in.

Billy's grinning innocent, like, *Something wrong, Stevie?*

And also, maybe this was the wrong time to take a sip of piping hot oolong, because as soon as he feels Billy's foot, Steve burns his fucking tongue, starts sputtering like a total asshole.

Dustin's next to him and raps on Steve's back thunderously, says, "You good, man?"

"Fine," Steve snaps.

"Hey, careful, don't *choke*," Billy says with an eyebrow cocked. He leans in to eagerly take one of the neon straws in his mouth, slurping from green plastic while decidedly avoiding the pink straw, pushing his reject Steve's way. The ice inside the ceramic tinkles in response when he stirs it over. "Drink up, princess. Pink one's yours."

He might as well have just called out "*no homo*." Like straw color fucking *matters* when they're sharing this girly-ass drink between them. Like Billy's not secure enough in his masculinity to condone pink. When the *drink* is practically fucking pink in the first place.

Just two dudes, sharing a rum punch bowl, fighting over who gets to use the green straw.

Absolutely nothing *gay* about that, right?

Billy chews at his straw, he always does, and Steve hates that. Because when he took Steve's latte earlier today, he'd only taken a few sips before he bit the plastic 'til it was unrecognizable, ruined.

Oral fucking fixation, Steve *gets* it, he sees Billy's necklace in his mouth when he's cramming for a test in the library and the way he chews on his pinky nail when they're ordering at a fast food window and how he'll suck absently on an unlit cig *any* time of the day, like, can you chill? Now Steve definitely can't have the fucking green straw because it doesn't even *work* right anymore, like. Billy is just. So *annoying*.

This whole time the kids don't seem to notice that anything's really amiss, save for the fact that Billy's actually peacefully coexisting with them, and not like, breaking things.

Maybe it's because they're all sated with Billy's weed that they snuck behind Nancy's back before they left the drive-in in the Wheeler's truck. They're distracted, digging into fried rice and dumplings and egg rolls and talking with their mouths full about *fucking Marvel*.

Steve tries for camouflage, just nods along with what they're saying because he missed, like, a good two thirds of the movie and he's *not about to explain why that is*.

Leave it to Dustin to ruin a good thing, though. Subtlety isn't his strong suit. Actually, it's a completely foreign concept entirely.

"You gotta be shitting me," Dustin says, letting his fork clatter to his plate so fucking dramatically, seemingly out of nowhere, like he's been holding this in and he can't anymore. He gestures straight at Billy. "Is no one gonna say it?"

That damn sanshin song sounds so fucking loud and uncomfortable right now, or maybe Billy Hargrove is just deadly quiet. The innocent pluck of strings stretches out after the sentence, and Steve's waiting for someone to break the silence, feels like he's at a railroad crossing waiting for that last fucking car to whizz by. Like, *how can it just keep coming? This has to be it. This has to be the end. It can't go on forever.*

It literally goes on forever, Steve's convinced.

Finally Billy's like, "Gonna say *what?* "

He tears beef teriyaki straight off the stick with his teeth. Narrows his eyes so his bushy brows cinch together. Chews slowly, his cheeks all wadded up with meat, somehow no less menacing than usual, and adds, "The fuck's that supposed to mean?"

Dustin turns to Steve for support, but Steve's holding up his hands in submission with his chopsticks woven between his fingers, because he doesn't want any part of this.

"Aren't you guys sworn enemies? Why is *he* here?"

"Because he's *the plug*, " Mike butts in, protective, disgruntled, under his overgrown curls. That kid's going to be such a douche in a few years, Steve already can tell. Look at the RIPNDIP shirt, the white high top Vans, the larger-than-life *hair*, God. A different style, sure, all nerdy and scrawny, like 2008 emo grew up and bought a JUUL. But still so kindred to *someone else* Steve knows.

"Well yeah, but I mean, he really kicked the shit out of Steve, really

let him have it, and we're just gonna pretend this whole thing is normal?"

He breaks off the sentence though, because Mike's next to Billy across the table looking completely betrayed, just about to suck down a crab rangoon but stops to mouth *what the fuck, dude*. Billy's too busy to notice him do it, has moved on to viciously tearing apart a chicken wing.

"Um, yeah, cool, *thanks*? For the vote of confidence?" Steve says. "I'm right fucking here, in case you guys forgot. And like, let me break this plate over your head and we'll see if *you* square the fuck up — "

"I'm just willing to let bygones be bygones, Henderson," says Billy, ignoring Steve and staring coolly at Dustin. Suddenly all Don Corleone. Pink drink aside, that is. "Anybody ever teach you fuckin' manners?"

Mike's glaring, like, *Don't ruin this for me*, kicks Dustin in the shin so hard Steve can feel it, and Dustin shuts right up after that.

They're in Steve's car again, idling while the kids, with their take-out containers, meander slowly out from under the hazy neon red of the restaurant's sign.

"I'm buzzed," Billy says jovially, thrumming with it. "I wanna get drunk in the hot tub. Did you know you get drunker in hot tubs? Can we go to your place? The Harrington manor, let's fucking *get it*, let's go. " He drums his hands on the dash.

"You using me for my hot tub?"

"I'll make it worth your while, baby," he says. He runs his tongue over his lower lip, and Steve doesn't miss the way it glistens with his spit in the low light. The way he closes his mouth, prods the tip of his tongue against one cheek, so fucking suggestive and *obscene*, like, is he fucking kidding? "This time, I promise. Really will. Take me to the *manor*."

"Okay," Steve says stupidly, because he can't actually say 'no' to Billy if he *wanted* to, and like, Billy didn't quite pack for this, so the logical

conclusion is he doesn't have swim shorts.

Steve might offer to let him borrow his (which would also be *hot?! Because they'll be too tight on Billy's ass?!*) but he knows Billy well enough to know that he'll laugh in his face and say *fuck no*, brush by him and strip out of those stupid grey sweatpants all slow so Steve will see his toned ass, will watch him wade into the chlorine until the pooling bubbles obstruct his fucking *dick* and —

— like, he's going to be naked in Steve's hot tub, which is.

A pretty awesome stroke of luck.

The kids are still in plain sight and the Wheeler's truck is right there next to them. Nancy's got her back pressed up against the car as Jonathan tucks her hair behind her ear and touches his mouth to hers, gentle.

Billy sees that evidently, because he leans over the console, his breath smelling stinging and harsh like rum, sugary sweet like pineapple, and he's laughing kind of tipsy, says low, "What are you staring at? You miss when I kiss you, or something?"

"Miss when you make me *come*," Steve corrects, all fucking projected sass, because his heart's beating in his ears and he's got it so *bad*. Fuck. *Fuck*.

Billy likes that answer, even though they both know it's not entirely true, that it's not the only reason Steve drove this douchebag two fucking hours to Hawkins. Steve can tell he likes it because he makes like he's going to kiss Steve for real, but it's mostly just his wet tongue licking, parting Steve's lips, sloppy as ever. It's got Steve's dick straining against his pants, regardless.

They pull away before they're caught. Rather, before it starts getting *good*.

Billy takes Steve's hand, separates the index finger from the rest and guides it to his mouth, and Steve's hypnotized, watching like he's trying to record this to memory to watch later. He probably *will* think

about it when he's alone, because Billy flattens his tongue out, licking Steve's finger hot and wet and slow. He closes his lips around it, slides it down his throat so Steve feels the roughness of his hard palette give way to the silky soft at the very back. He sucks on it hard, so his cheeks sink in, and Steve can hear the saliva moving around with the force of it.

And like that, Steve's popped a fucking boner.

"I'm horny again," Billy growls as he takes Steve's finger out, runs it across his pink lips. "Really fuckin' horny. Fuck."

The timbre of his voice makes it so all Steve can think about is being pinned to his own mattress.

His eyelashes are fluttering, he's breathless, like, "I can *tell*, Jesus."

"So you wanna get outta here as much as I do?"

They're interrupted by the interior lights popping on as Max yanks on the door and crawls into the backseat. Rolls her eyes in the rearview mirror behind Steve. "You guys are total idiots."

Steve and Billy both whip around in their seats to look at where she's sitting hunched over with her elbows on her knees in the center seat. The synchronicity between him and Billy, the way they're on the same wavelength like that, it has Steve feeling vaguely repulsed, like is he his goddamn *mother*?

Worse, they rush over each other to speak like a hive mind, a jumble of, "You little bitch, did I fucking *say* we'd give you a ride —" "— Okay, but what did I ever do to you, I've been nothing but nice to you, to *all* of you —"

But despite this, a few minutes later they're on the road, saddled up with Max and Dustin in the back who're arguing over whether Scarlet Witch or Black Widow is hotter and Billy looks like he wants to actually *die*.

Steve agreed to take the kids back to cut down on Nancy's driving time since it's getting late. And he should have just been the selfish ex he is deep down, and just let Nancy and Jonathan handle it like

they'd insisted, because it's a *bad plan* from the start.

Dustin is dropped off without a hitch, although the whole ride Billy won't look at him or speak to him, still a little sore about getting accosted in front of everybody. Steve *wants* to give Dustin the benefit of the doubt and assume he's genuinely clueless that they're anything more than just friends. But somehow it feels like the way Dustin prompted them was very pointed. Very knowing. Mike and his big fucking mouth.

They get to the Hargrove house and immediately it's weird. Because it's one in the morning and even from down the street it's evident the lights are on, and Billy's dad is totally military and uptight, goes to bed at like, ten at the latest. Nothing like Steve's parents, who are invariably awake at two, breaking their backs organizing fucking paperwork or getting wine drunk out with friends, depending on the day of the week.

"Shit," Max squeaks, peering from where she's slumped against the door. "They're *up*? I'm still kind of baked. Do I smell like I've been smoking?"

"You're *fine*, it was only twenty bucks worth," Billy says. He fucks with the dials until hot air is blasting and rolls the windows down. "You only could've had like, two hits, right? Just air out."

"Should I drive around for a while? Let her sober up?"

"Doesn't matter, he definitely already sees us," says Billy, and he turns around in the passenger seat to inspect Max again. Squints against the dark until the ring of a streetlight cruises over the car. "You look fine. Seriously. Just stop acting all 'spicious. Like you catch any heat from him, anyway."

"Eye drops," Steve says hurriedly, gesturing to the glove box. "Fuck, fuck. Oh my God, he's probably gonna blame *me*. Why do I let you do this shit, Billy?"

He slows to a crawl so Billy can properly rummage through, pass the bottle back to Max. For some reason, Steve's expecting her to not know how to put them in, but she makes quick work of it. Like,

maybe she just has contacts, so she knows what's up? Or is Steve really this old, and this girl just blazes it all the time, knows all the intricacies of being a stoner — but didn't she just move up from the *middle school*?

"How the fuck was I supposed to know Mike fucking Wheeler was going to get the brat stoned?" Billy's snarling. "He's dope, but. This is *not chillin'*."

Billy's fucking dad is looming out there on the front steps, a shark under porch lights, waiting. Steve pulls up to the curb quietly and tries not to look because his head is buzzing too, a debilitating combination making him paranoid by weed and sluggish from alcohol.

Like, he's fine to drive, since Billy hoarded the majority of their fucking Scorpion bowl anyway, but he's on *edge*.

"Uh, aren't you coming, Billy?" Max hisses, blinking away the saline. It drips down her freckled cheeks as Steve watches in the rearview mirror. She brushes it away with equally freckly hands.

"He's staying with me, tonight," he says before Billy can respond. Before Billy can change his mind. "Um. Party? At my place."

"Gross," she says, scrunching up her face. Because she fucking *knows*, God, Steve wishes he could disappear. "Whatever. Gross."

Max takes a steadying breath and lets herself out into the grass, padding away with leftover fried rice in hand.

"Maxine, get inside," Neil Hargrove says, loud enough to hear over the faint rumble of the engine. Like she'd had any intention of standing around in the yard waiting to see what this asshole was going to pull.

Neil approaches the car looking surly as fuck. Well, he looks like a man who's stayed up worrying about his new wife's kid, which Steve supposes, would make one pissy, but. There's something in his posture that's just so fucking mean. Arms crossed over his chest. Warning.

Steve's dropped Max off like, *a zillion times*, and Neil's never come out to greet him before. Granted, he used to drop her off during like, daylight hours, nine at night the very latest, never late enough to warrant a check-in from the parents or anything, but still.

Steve suddenly feels really stoned with Neil approaching his vehicle like this. It's as if his fears have come true, and the cops have finally pulled him over for clambaking.

"*Ugh*," Billy groans. Then through his teeth, "Just stay here."

He pops out to meet Neil, traipses along the front bumper of the car. The headlights light him up sinisterly as he passes through their beams.

He stands in front of Steve's window, leans up against it all lazy.

"Look who showed up," Neil notes, more of a grunt than anything. '*Showed up*,' like Billy's a stray dog at the back door, not his fucking son away at college, or anything. "You didn't call."

"What, I gotta schedule an appointment, now?" Billy says. All bite. Steve can only see him from the back based on what's visible through his car window — just that his fucking sassy hips are cocked, that's it. "Don't worry, I won't keep you. I ain't here to visit."

"We didn't even know you were going to be in town."

And like, he doesn't exactly sound pleasantly surprised about it.

"Well, I didn't know I would be, either," says Billy. As if he would have ever let them know he was coming back, even if he'd planned this *weeks* in advance. "Next time I'll be sure to text Susan for *brunch*."

"You smell like marijuana," Neil says, ignoring Billy. "Do you have any idea what time it is?"

Steve is doing his best to pretend he doesn't exist.

"Yeah, yeah. I *know*. You should just be happy we took her home. Honestly, you should be *thanking* me, 'cause I have plans, and I

could'a made her take a fucking Uber, but I didn't, 'cause I'm a *good* step-brother — ”

“We’ve been waiting up all night for her to come home,” he cuts Billy off. “She’s not answering her phone, we had no idea where she was. And then I come to find out she’s with you? Susan almost called the police.”

“You knew she’d be at the drive-in, didn’t you? That gets out *late*. It’s not my fault. Y’know, the more and more you talk about this, the less and less it sounds like my problem.”

“So let me get this straight,” Neil says evenly. “You were with her, and you didn’t even once think to have her call us. Didn’t think we’d be worried. Just didn’t even cross your mind.”

“Right, because we’re both adults, and I’m not her fucking *babysitter*,” Billy says. “She’s a big kid now, Neil, you gotta treat her like one. Listen. I have a *party* to be at. If she’s out past curfew, that’s on her, alright?”

And Steve’s finding it hard not to agree with that, like what’s this guy’s *deal*? Steve’s mom had always wanted to have another child. If they’d had one, and Steve even spent any time with the kid at all, even just offering up rides, he knows she’d have been over the fucking moon.

Because, in actuality? Going out to dinner with all the kids like that? That was really *nice*. That was pretty un-Billy. Maybe he was blazed and buzzed as he is wont to be, but Billy’s made progress, he’s come a long way -- and dare Steve say, he *cares* about Max. Somewhere in there. Under Coors and American Spirits and whiskey and weed and Mexican food and shoes.

Doesn’t Neil realize that? That Billy wouldn’t fucking *be* here if he didn’t care about the girl a little bit?

But Steve’s somehow pretty sure that, even awkward and nervous and stoned, Steve could have probably defused the tension a little better than this.

Like, by losing that shitty tone, for starters. He may not know much about Billy's relationship with his dad so maybe his opinion is invalid here, but he knows how to charm parents, bargain and explain his way out of punishment. (Steve's never been as much as grounded a day in his life, even when his mom first found his weed, or when he got taken in to the station, all blackout drunk, for vandalizing the high school. *Just don't do it again, baby.* Steve's not a bad kid. He's just prone to stumble into bad situations.)

Even despite Billy's confrontational attitude, Neil doesn't raise his voice back. That might be even scarier than if he did. So lethally silent, it couldn't be heard from next door.

"Are you *drunk*? Please tell me you're not drunk driving with Max in the car. I know you're not about to tell me that."

"No — no, I'm *not*. We *weren't*."

"This whole fraternity thing," Neil says nebulously. It sounds bitter in his mouth. "I don't like it. It's always sounded like a bad idea to me. Ever since you've been in it, you've been an irresponsible, belligerent mess."

That strikes a fucking chord in Billy. He goes rigid.

"Dad," he says, which Steve hasn't ever heard him say before, in all the years he's known him, in the few times he's overheard Billy bitching (but carefully not revealing much) about Neil to teammates at practice or his friends while he ripped a vape in the high school bathrooms, like, Steve's only ever heard ' *Neil*,' used interchangeably with '*fucker*,' if he names him at all. "What's this got to do with Fiji?"

"I don't like it," Neil repeats. "I don't like you doing drugs. I don't like those boys. And I don't like who you are when you come back. That's not the person I raised. We'll drug test you next time you're here. You keep this up, you're not going back there."

"*Dad*. You can't fuckin' *do* that — "

"See, I don't care what you choose to do," says Neil, inching closer. "If you want to get a DUI, and get kicked out of school — if you want

to flip your car into a ditch, well, that's your decision. But you leave your little sister out of this. You could have gotten her killed."

"But I'm not drunk, I'm not even *driving*, " Billy enunciates. He's exasperated, his body language has changed. Frantic. "I'm fine, we just took the brats out to dinner, okay, Harrington *paid* for them all, he was being a good guy — "

"The Harrington's boy, who used to drive my daughter? Is he in your fraternity? Is he wasted, too?"

Billy goes stony. Like he's made a slip he knows he shouldn't have.

He doesn't move from where he's standing in front of Steve's window, despite Neil squatting to see inside. When Billy speaks again, his voice is low, like he's trying to keep it down this time.

"Hey, come on. He was only trying to be nice. Look, I don't owe you an explanation, anyway, okay? Can't we talk about this inside?"

And somehow the coercion works, likely because Neil's got some choice words for Billy and prefers to keep them from drifting inside the curtains of nextdoor neighbors. He's monstrous, but only in private. Reputations to keep up.

Billy's trudging up the front steps Steve knows he'd like never to have to traverse ever again. They disappear into the house and Steve snaps his gaze away. He lets his seat drop back and just lays there. Tries not to worry about it. Tries not to think about stepping in.

It's not his place. Billy wouldn't *let* it be his place.

But he's waiting outside for like, *way* too long. He shouldn't have let Billy take off like that. The high's mostly wearing off now, but he's still feeling lingering paranoia riddled up through his chest. Like, how long has it *been*? He didn't look at the clock before Billy went in, and now he's stuck in a fucking time warp.

At last, Steve hears the screen door snap shut. He scrambles to right himself from where he'd dropped the seat back in time to see Billy storming down the steps, kicking the shit out of a potted plant so the vase shatters over the path, across the lawn.

It would almost be funny, the way soil flies everywhere and shards cascade on the stone, except. It's really, really *not*.

Billy's face is dark and grey in the moonlight, and he hangs his head when he gets in the car, slumps against the seat.

And Steve can't gauge what happened, not without seeing Billy's expression, so he's stuck sort of staring like that, doesn't even know what he's searching for, until Billy shakes him out of it like, "Can you fucking *start the car*? Or are you trying to have a sleepover with Maxine?"

"Sorry — I, um. Yeah, fuck," Steve says, hands shaking as he turns over the ignition and peels away from the curb. "I'm sorry. I'm like, dumb. I just."

Billy seems so young like this. Having just gotten scolded in the front yard. Rolling his bloodshot eyes. Feet up on Steve's dash, one bouncing, jostling anxiously like he needs a smoke. Steve would knock Billy's Nikes back off if he wasn't low-key panicking himself.

They're driving for a few minutes before Steve works up the courage to ask.

"You okay?"

"Fuckin' dandy," Billy says, and it seems Steve's reminded him of his bad habits. He fishes cigs out of his bag in the backseat and lights one up, his cheeks hollowing as he sucks hard.

"What happened? Billy, seriously. I'm not trying to pry, but if you want to talk about it — "

"Just forget it," Billy spits. He rolls down his window and leans against the door. Purses his lips and exhales. Thin smoke wafts out through the crack. "Get me outta here."

"We can talk," says Steve, because this sounds like a chance to fix what he'd let slip by him in high school. The action he knows he should have taken. "But you know that."

"I have nothing to say to you, because nothing *happened*, alright? Just

Neil's usual bullshit. Jesus."

"Whatever you say," Steve says, because maybe Steve's a bad liar, but Billy's no better.

"Look, Steve, honestly? I don't want your help, I don't want your sympathy. None of it would've happened if you drove me to your fuckin' house in the first place like I told you to."

"Yeah, fuck me, right? All my fault. Dude, I was only trying to be nice to *your* sister."

"She's not even my real fucking sister!" Billy shouts, so *trivial* and loud inside the car, and his eyes look so fucking crazy. He rips the cig fiendishly and it glows red at the tip under cover of darkness. Fizzles out to a dull glow when he stops pulling on it. "Stop *saying* that. It's so fuckin' annoying."

This is so obviously *not* about whether Max is his blood relative.

In fact, nothing's ever about what Billy says it is.

It's quiet for a bit as they drive. Main street's dead. Ghost town, closes early. Only the Chinese place and McDonald's stay open this late. Not like their college town, where bars stay open until two. It feels strange and hazy to coast straight through blinking yellow lights that have retired from directing traffic at this witching hour.

Proceed at your own discretion. Steve doesn't even look up at them. He's terrible at making decisions.

Maybe that's some kind of metaphorical shit about his whole entire life. He wouldn't know, he doesn't have a poetic bone in his body.

"I've never met him before, you know," he says, hesitant. "That was probably a pretty shit first impression. I should have said something. Sorry I'm such an idiot."

Billy shrugs. He's all hunched up in his seat. Cig in his mouth. Flicking his lighter absently, brow furrowed as he watches the flame generate. Extinguish. Repeat.

“It doesn’t matter,” he says.

And Steve doesn’t say anything at first, they’re on the way to Steve’s house and Billy’s got “So He Won’t Break” by The Black Keys streaming, soft, over the speakers. It’s whisper-quiet but the bass still shakes against Steve’s leg where he’s got it pressed to the source of the sound.

“Okay, yeah, that’s fine, to *you*, ” Steve says as they roll up to a stop sign. “It matters to me.”

There’s surprisingly another car on the road stopped in front of them, and Steve’s appreciative of it, because it makes it feel less like they’re completely alone in the world, which is a fucking *stifling* feeling, one Steve can’t deal with right now.

He watches Billy’s face in the red taillights that glow before them. How he’s transfixed by the tiny metal wheel under his thumb.

Shick. Shick. Shick.

“It shouldn’t,” says Billy. “It shouldn’t matter.”

“But it does, he’s your *dad* —”

“But he’s a *fucking* asshole, okay?” he says. “You heard the way he talks to me. Don’t act like you didn’t. Maxine disobeys him, he takes that out on *me*. He doesn’t give a *fuck* about me. Unless it looks good for him.”

“That isn’t true.”

“You don’t know that,” Billy continues, ashing the cig outside the window aggressively. “You don’t, you don’t know shit. He’s not even involved in my life. Only thing he’s ever done for me is give me his G.I. bill. The military pays for my school. Not like he was going to use it anyway, so what the fuck does it matter? Scholarship covers some of it, too, but that’s all *me*. I worked hard for that.”

“Maybe you’re right, that I don’t know shit,” says Steve. “But I’m just trying to help, alright? I just thought it would help to talk it out.”

“You always wanna talk about your *feelings*, princess, but you’re outta line.”

That’s probably supposed to hurt, but Steve doesn’t know what to feel.

The BMW turns onto Steve’s road and Steve just focuses on Dan Auerbach’s voice. (This probably isn’t the time, he knows, but he has to admit, this song is pretty fucking good, not what he was expecting of Billy.)

They pull up to Steve’s house and it’s dark except for the glowing garden lights. His dad’s Mercedes is missing from where it usually resides in the driveway, outside the garage. Steve parks in its place, turns off the engine, but doesn’t take his keys out yet so he can leave the music.

It’s so still. They don’t make any moves to get out yet, it’s like an unspoken page they’re both on.

Steve interrupts the weirdness, jerks his head to observe Billy, but he won’t look Steve in the eye.

“I just want to be part of your life, and you keep blocking me out,” Steve says. Billy doesn’t flinch. He does flick his cig onto the pavement outside, though. A sign of life — that he’s listening. “It’s all I want. Don’t you *get* that?”

Billy doesn’t say anything at first. “Chamber of Reflection” by Mac DeMarco, in the background. A three AM fever dream. Dissonant and stagnant and strange. Is this song usually this long? It stretches out between them feeling unfamiliar.

“Everything’s really all about you, isn’t it?” Billy says finally, still not looking at Steve. He hunches forward to peer up at Steve’s house darkly. One eyebrow cocked. “King Steve. Huh. No fuckin’ kidding. Look at this place. No *wonder* you’re the way you are.”

He says it like he’s disgusted.

“Okay, where the fuck is this coming from?”

“You say you wanna be part of my life,” explains Billy, and he’s talking with his hands the way he does when he gets angry. Expressive and sharp, purposeful. “But I don’t believe that, not really. You don’t want to deal with this. It’s all about what you want, when *you* want it.”

Billy stops himself, laughs listlessly. “I just think it’s funny that I’ve wanted this since I *met* you, and now you want to act like *I’m* the one who’s unavailable, when all I’ve been doing is trying. Steve, I’m really *trying*, but it’s so hard. No one expects anything from you. You don’t gotta prove yourself. You just do what you want.”

There’s a lot Steve wants to say to that.

The thing with Billy is, he’s not exactly hiding their relationship. He’s not scared to have Steve over to Fiji in front of the brothers, who are arguably the most important people in his undergrad life. He’s not embarrassed of *Steve*, or even what they did together. It wasn’t that he couldn’t be seen with him, specifically. It was the idea of existing somewhere on the outskirts of straight that clearly scared the shit out of Billy, that shook him to his core. It’s a psychological thing — something he’s internalized over the years from his dad’s strict military parenting.

If Neil found out? “*I’d be dead, Steve*,” Billy’d said earlier.

Because Billy doesn’t have Steve’s mom. Or Steve’s dad. He doesn’t have Nancy. He doesn’t have Dustin or Lucas or Mike or Will or Jonathan, or even *Max*, not with the way he holds her at an arm’s length. And Steve takes them all for granted, for sure.

Maybe Billy’s right, that Steve’s been thinking it’s all about him, but it’s fucking not, it’s larger. What’s going on with Billy, that’s a deep-rooted self-hatred. It would take a long time to unlearn entirely.

(Nancy would be so proud of him for picking all this up. She’d use words like “intuitive.”)

And the irony is, this whole time, Steve’s felt so used, disposable, let Billy come and go as he pleased, let himself be treated like shit —

But Billy's been vying for *his* attention? Looking in from the outside into Steve's life?

Please.

Are they really this shit at communicating? Steve just doesn't know what the fuck is up. He likely never will.

When he's finished speaking, Billy starts getting out of Steve's car, abrupt, slams the door behind him and his drawstring bag, but he's treading *up the path to front of Steve's house*, like he wants to get the last word of this conversation but has zero intentions of walking away from this.

Steve doesn't believe he could ever walk away completely.

Billy's sitting on the wicker chair outside on the porch, chin rested on his knuckles when Steve finally reaches him. He's staring Steve down from where Steve steps gingerly over the stone path. Billy's a wild animal. No fucking enclosure. Steve knows to be cautious.

"Literally fuck off. I wanna be left alone."

"Why're you sitting at my house, then."

"Cause I don't got anywhere else to go. "

Which, maybe is melodramatic, as Billy tends to be — and isn't totally true. He certainly can't go back to his dad's, not right now, but Steve can think of a few places he might storm off to that would warmly accept him, even at this hour (Joyce, *Karen*, for example).

But hearing what he said, the destitute way he uttered it? It *sounds* so pathetic — *feels* even worse. Like a punch in the gut.

"Alright, come inside," Steve says, not an invitation, but an order. He unlocks the door and holds it open expectantly. It smells clean and pristine inside, familiar. "You're going, so. Don't try to fight me."

Billy's a statue. Unmoving. Little *bitch*.

"I'm fine out here. I can smoke cigs. Princess Steve wouldn't let me

do that in the *manor*, anyway.”

“Well, you can’t *sit here* all night.” Steve cocks his hips, arms across his chest.

“Watch me,” says Billy, narrowing his eyes in response. He pulls out his *fucking phone*, then, and he’s like, “I just need your WiFi password. Princess.”

And Steve is really. Really, truly, honestly, whole-fucking-heartedly. So sick of Billy Hargrove.

But he’s also really *not*.

He doesn’t want Billy to sit outside by himself at three in the morning, like he knows Billy’s proud enough to do.

He doesn’t want that, he wants Billy in his house, drunk and silly on Steve’s parents’ booze, legs tangled against Steve’s under fresh white sheets, his skin warm and damp from the hot tub, curls leaving wet marks on Steve’s pillows, where they’ll kiss and *kiss* and twine their fingers above their heads and eventually lie in the dark together to share air between them like they haven’t ever left each other bleeding and bruised.

Maybe Steve’s got a death wish, maybe something’s fucked up in his wiring, because there’s a fine line between “*I’ll fucking kill you, Harrington*” and “*tell me to stop if I’m hurting you*” and he *likes* that, wants to find the grey area where the two meet, to exist forever in that space.

And Steve knows, God, he fucking knows, that things might be different on Monday when they pass each other on campus. Different *tomorrow morning*, even. That Billy will wake from his trance to slip into the easy, detached way he talks with his brothers, bury this down and deny it only to reignite it the next Friday when he’s got a little alcohol in his system, but it’s *worth* that risk.

Worth it, because he wants to get off with Billy, to suck on Billy’s tongue and get fucked hard in his old bedroom, but he also wants to feel the rise and fall of Billy’s chest when he drifts to sleep and smell

traces of his spicy cologne on the still-warm sheets when Billy gets up to shower in the morning.

Steve would let it happen again, gladly, because he's never been so *stupid* over someone before. Being Billy's secret was better, always better, than being nothing to him at all.

Wasn't like Steve had anything left to lose, anyway.

So he's done with playing around. They were *fucking*, like, *two* hours ago, and now they're at *this* again, bitching at each other like Dustin and Lucas, for fuck's sake.

He decides he's going to hold that router password hostage. At least until he gets Billy in his goddamn house.

"Do you fucking want me or not?" Steve demands. Because honestly? He's getting fucking whiplash. "If you do, if you give a single shit about me, you'll come in."

Billy's like, "That's stupid, a *fucking stupid* thing to say. You know I do. Want you, I mean."

"Then tell me why you keep pushing me away."

"Because I can't do this," Billy spits. He shoves his phone into his pocket. Shakes his head too fast. "I can't, I just can't."

"Because you're afraid."

That sounds like Billy's voice coming out of him — as if by possession, or ventriloquism — doesn't it?

Billy's knuckles are white where they're rested on the arms of the chair, appearing brighter than the rest of his skin in the dark as he digs his blunt nails into the calloused plush of his palms.

"Not afraid of shit," he says, bristling. Liar liar liar. "Look, I want you. I always have. But that's not enough for you. I can't give you want you want, I'll never be able to. I don't even know if I want to, okay? This is a *lot*. This is fast."

“You think I don’t know that? We had *sex*, ” Steve blurts. “Like, actual, real sex. Doesn’t that mean something to you? Because you’re acting like it doesn’t mean *anything*. ”

It sounds ridiculous to his own ears — it sounds like girls Steve fucked in high school, it sounds like Nancy, it sounds weak and feminine and he *rejects* all those perceptions of himself — but it just comes out of him, he can’t stop it.

“Steve, baby, you’re not listening to me,” Billy says, and he’s still shaking his head, obsessively, like he can’t keep his thoughts straight, can’t get the words out quick enough, can’t stop time to figure it out, he’s just. Flustered and upset. “You have no idea. It means everything.”

And, okay.

That nearly kills Steve.

Maybe that was too big a reveal for Billy because he’s on his feet suddenly, and he throws Steve back against the siding of the house with all his weight, so forceful it hurts. Knocks the wind out of Steve in that heady way that makes him gasp for oxygen.

That breathlessness, it’s all too familiar, like when Billy pushed him to the ground on the court, all *plant your feet, Harrington, draw a charge, Harrington*, intending to hurt him and tear him down but wasn’t that *funny* that he couldn’t get Steve’s fucking name out of his mouth?

Billy’s got Steve pinned there, caged by large muscles on either side of his head. As if it even crossed Steve’s mind to try to leave this position where he’s cornered, when all he can see, can think about is the contrast of Billy’s eyes, how they’re glacial in color, but *ablaze* from being so pissed off and torn up.

“Are you trying to scare me?”

“No. I’m not. I wasn’t. You just make me so pissed sometimes.”

“I know you think if you beat my ass, it’ll make this go away,” Steve starts, brave, because yeah, he’s definitely got that death wish. “But it

won't. You can't make it. You can try, but it happened. This, whatever the fuck it is, okay, it *happened*. ”

“You're a fuckin' idiot, you're so stupid,” Billy says, and he drops his right arm. Still trapping Steve with the other. He's touching Steve, then, allowing his rough fingertips to graze his chin, tilting it up like he's thinking about kissing the stupid out of him.

Steve would definitely let him give that idea a shot, if they're being real with each other.

“So do it,” he says, daring him, and the words feel familiar because he's said this before — but this time he's not sure which one he means.

Hit him? Kiss him?

He leaves the choice up to Billy, purposefully ambiguous, because he almost can't figure out what would feel more satisfying.

It's not a shock to Steve that Billy acts on the latter — but with the force, the aggression, the desperation he uses to do so, Billy *might as well* have just laid Steve out, punched him black and blue.

Steve's read things where kisses “bruise” and he thinks maybe he understands how that feels, now, because their lips are pressing together in the traditional sense for only a moment before they're using tongue and teeth, biting into the softness of pink lips, kissing so hard it *hurts*.

And, mind you, the front door's still open, and somehow despite it all, Steve's over here in the back of his mind thinking *oh my God we're letting in so many bugs, there are going to be moths everywhere* but for once in his life he's trying this thing where he doesn't go anal-retentive-Harrington. He's enjoying this, he's letting Billy take control the way he's so inclined to do.

Billy's eyebrows are mean, knit together, as he migrates down Steve's neck, licking, chewing on the skin above his pulse. Sucks hard enough to leave marks. Marks Steve hasn't had since the early days of high school, when he was young and stupid and horny and urgent.

He supposes they're still all those things now.

Billy shoves his knee in between Steve's legs, rubs it over Steve's aching cock and Steve's breath hitches, caught in his throat.

"You like that?" Billy asks, and Steve can hear he's smiling, impish.

"A *lot*. Fuck. Wanna come again. In the hot tub, baby, come *on*." His cheeks heat up at having to say it.

Manipulation to get Billy inside. Off his damn front steps like some sad, sorry stray.

"Okay, okay, you got me, I'll go," he hisses, level with Steve's ear. "I'm sorry, okay? Sorry I was acting out. Or whatever."

And do they ever really solve things? Not really. Because there's a lot there and it can't all be fixed in one day, and Steve's not sure that's what he wants, anyway. He doesn't need things to be perfect, he likes them this way.

Billy's tugging Steve over the threshold, dragging his drawstring bag with them, like you never know when you're going to need condoms and lube and way too much weed. They trip over the little Southwestern rug on the shiny wood flooring as they kiss, and Billy tears Steve out of his shirt, headed in the direction of the patio outside. The door slams behind them when Billy kicks it and they're laughing, giddy, into each other's open mouths.

But Billy pulls away, looking around like he's lost, and he's like, "Shit."

"Huh?" Steve says, impatient, because he's a little disappointed Billy's stopped paying him attention, even for a second, it's like. *Mad* frustrating. Attention is the currency this relationship *runs* on, and after all that *work*, Steve's about to throw a fucking tantrum without it.

Billy's inspecting the mod decorations in the foyer. All angles and gloss and simplicity. Antique-y looking carpets for a pop of color. It's for sure cute in there.

“Didn’t think y’all could get any more boujee,” he says, pushing out of Steve’s grip. “But would you look at that. Like a different place since I saw it last. The Harringtons really do the most.”

Steve shrugs. Crosses his arms over his chest. Just shirtless, but feels so naked without Billy all up *on* him.

“Booze still where it was?”

“Naturally.”

Billy blows right by Steve’s mom’s wine display in the hall. The crimson bottles are held up by an intricate looping metal rack, garnished with fake leaves. So Pinterest. Billy doesn’t even see it, he’s not interested.

And like, Steve would rather have some good fucking wine tonight after wrecking himself with nips the night before, because he knows it’s Billy Hargrove’s style to swig straight out of a bottle of whatever whiskey’s available. But he’s not going to fight, he doesn’t have *time* to fight, because he has to chase after this asshole to make sure he doesn’t like, start breaking shit.

Billy likes to break shit.

“Damn, Stevie. I don’t really know what kind a lot of these even are, if I’m honest, but they all look real pretty.”

Steve’s like, “The fuck are you doing in the dark? Alexa, turn on kitchen lights,” and when Echo complies with his request he finds Billy’s squatted down in Steve’s kitchen, rummaging through the liquor cabinet.

“Robot house,” Billy says distrustfully, turning to cast a weary eye at Echo where it sits on the marble counter. “That *thing’s* gonna turn us in to the government.”

Steve shrugs. Leans against the countertop, taps his fingers against it and watches Billy dig. *Click, click.* “I think my parents talk to it more than me when I come home. Is that sad?”

“No, that sounds *nice*, ” says Billy, a little sour. Steve hums. There’s a

beat before Billy's like, "So, what do you want, anyway? *Grey Goose*? Princess likes straight 'Goose, doesn't he."

Steve suppresses a shiver. Those Smirnoff nips still fresh in his mind.

"*Not vodka*. No," Steve moans, sure that Billy's said that on purpose. "Something else, anything. Can you just *pick* something so we can get started?"

"Well, there's a lot of options, *okay*, Stevie? No offense, man. But this is, like, a lot of money on booze. Are your parents alcoholics, or something?"

"They entertain a lot. Jesus. Maybe they are. I don't know. Just *pick*."

Billy procures a bottle, grinning deviously. He holds it at the neck and swivels it around so the liquor sloshes about inside. "Okay, now this one I'm familiar with. It's no Fireball, but it'll do."

He uncaps the Patron and waterfalls it down his throat from where he's perched on the charcoal tile. He makes a lot of it disappear in one go like he's being *timed*, it's a few shots worth, and for Steve's tolerance, that would be enough to get him feeling pretty lit.

Also. It's kind of sexy.

And it's not just because Steve's already fucking hard, okay. It's *actually* sexy. Like, Patron is a sexy bottle, right?

But it's also just *Billy*. With his earring dangling and his red, glassy eyes and his hair piled up on his head, the way he wears *elastics on his wrist* like a fucking chick but *better*, the way his ass looks in grey sweats, like, Steve would just push him over on the tiles and suck him off right there but they have a plan, a special premeditated plan, and Steve's all about sticking to those.

They finally make it outside to the hot tub, which his mom has spent so much time landscaping this season, like, it really seems like a cute hotel in Palm Springs, honestly. Little potted palms and cacti. String lights delicately woven around the iron fence.

Big ridiculous sound system.

Want to know the worst part?

Steve's got a fucking playlist ready. He's *had* it ready. All those times he's been drunk by himself in his dorm, that's when he adds things to it. Vampire Weekend and The Killers and old-school Fall Out Boy. Then all the trash indie songs he found on Pandora that, he thinks, are his secret (that he's so excited to show Billy before they all blow up and Steve can say *I told you so*). Some super gay shit might have snuck its way in there, too. He does it when he's drunk and feeling himself, okay.

And he sort of hates himself for it, but he's going to be super casual, just put it on in the background and fucking revel when each song is like. *Perfect* .

Steve's going mom-mode as usual, making sure they've got towels, turning on the bubbles and dialing the water temperature, and when he turns around Billy's *fully* naked, backlit by the fairy lights, all defined muscle and fine blonde hair on his tanned thighs. His dick's hard; it bobs, heavy, when he moves and Steve can't help but stare.

"Alright, strip, pretty boy," Billy says, sipping from the bottle. Watching him. Wolfish. "I promised you, and I keep my word."

"Yeah?" Steve asks, heart hammering. He kicks out of his shoes and he's like, stumbling out of his goddamn pants, it's *stupid*. Eager as all fuck, because he thinks of Billy being crude earlier. Tongue poking his cheek. Blowjob, Steve gets it. And it's immature, yeah, but. *Hot*.

And the way Billy sucked on his finger? Like, if that's any indication of his talents, Steve's already gone.

He thought Billy was too *man*, too concerned with his masculinity to blow him. Like, *seriously*? He's going to have a fucking heart attack before they even get that far.

"Gimme your phone," he says, and Steve fumbles to obey, because who in their right mind would argue with that? "If I'm gonna do this, I pick the music."

He plugs it into the lightning cable, and Steve's considering Billy's taste, how maybe Steve can tolerate The Weeknd but he'd rather actually die than fuck to anything *by or featuring* G-Eazy, but then Billy starts scrolling through *Steve's playlists*, and —

That was fucking quick.

"Oh my God," Billy muses, eyebrows high on his forehead as he looks over his shoulder at Steve. "Is this for me?"

"What? No — *no*," Steve stammers back at him, because maybe Steve's just blissfully ignorant but he wasn't anticipating Billy to start searching through his shit, like, *what the fuck*. "No, it isn't *for you*."

"It's *literally* titled 'Billy.' Is this like, a mixtape? Holy shit."

He's laughing a little, drinking Patron and fucking *laughing*.

"I *made* it because I wanted to *show* you some stuff," he says, and his cheeks are definitely fucking red now. He's grappling for his phone, but Billy's quicker and stronger, holds it away with a smile. The tequila sways with their movements. "It's because I want you to have better *taste*, okay? So obviously I named it that, because it's just shorthand for writing 'Songs to Educate Some Dumb Asshole.'"

"You were trying to *Nick-and-Norah's-Infinite-Playlist* me," Billy says, Cheshire, like that's a *thing*. Has Billy even *seen* that movie? (Steve fucking has. And he loved it.) He gets a high out of teasing Steve, he's all coy about it, like, "Just admit it. It's okay, I like it. It's *super cute*."

He says the last words in a lispy voice. And Steve wants to die.

But Billy puts it on anyway and the first thing that plays is "Sit Next to Me" by Foster the People and everything's *okay* because this is like, Steve's favorite non-Mac song and Billy's fucking naked, literally a modern Hercules like Steve's thought before, or *Thor*, even, like he's literally so fucking hot and now he's touching Steve's waist softly, pulling him in slow with one hand because the other one's holding tight to the Patron which feels cool against Steve's stomach, and they're *making out!!!* and then.

And then Billy gets on his fucking knees. Smiles up at Steve, like he

knows full well he's undoing every last bit of self restraint Steve has. Steve doesn't need to see Billy's knees to know later they'll be pink and indented with the jagged pattern of the paving, temporarily scarred from his attraction to Steve.

Billy pulls one more time out of the Patron, his lips wet and shining with it when he pops off the glass mouth of the bottle. Passes it up to Steve, who takes a swig, like he can *hang* with Billy, when he *knows* he can't, and almost chokes because tequila is *gross* anyway but right now it's lukewarm and why didn't they fucking put it in the freezer? But he pushes it down, more and more, until it's difficult to measure how much he's had.

But Billy's running his hands up the back of Steve's thighs, which sends a shock right up his spine, like how did Billy know how much Steve likes to be stroked there? *God*.

His cock looks so strange with Billy beneath it, hazy-eyed as he looks at it hungrily. He runs his finger tips up further, over Steve's ass, and that makes Steve's cock twitch.

Billy pokes out his tongue and licks the precome beaded at the tip of the head like Steve is *ice cream* and it creates a sticky, clear string between them.

When Billy speaks, there's a little slur to it. "You're wet," he says. "Look how wet I get you."

Steve wants to *laugh* because he doesn't know what else to do.

"Are you sure about this?" Steve breathes, because he *has* to ask, mostly because he can't believe it's real. He's swallowing, tongue suddenly dry like he'd gotten a mouthful of sand. "It's my turn?"

"Your turn."

Billy's eyes are glassy. He tugs at the elastic in his hair, shakes it out around his shoulders like a lion's mane. It's so blonde and curly and pretty and Steve wants to *touch*. Just touch. He communicates that by reaching for it, but stops himself. Like, maybe he's not supposed to do that. He isn't sure what Billy's amorphous rules are.

"It's okay, baby, you can play with it," he says. He grabs Steve's hand, combs it through his own hair. It's soft. Billy almost purrs when Steve strokes through it, the pads of Steve's fingers pressing into his scalp. "You can pull it, if you want. Pull it while you fuck my mouth."

Jesus Christ.

"You're really pretty," Steve gushes before he thinks it through. He forces more tequila down. Tugs on the curls experimentally. "You always say I am. But *you*, you're like. Really, really pretty. Fuck."

"Am I?" Billy asks, and he stops teasing up Steve's thighs. He wraps a fist around Steve's cock, and Steve can do little but watch him, in fucking awe as he licks up slow with the flat of his tongue over the whole length. "Pretty, huh? That why you jerk off to me? Why you think about me when you come? But wouldn't I look so much prettier with your come on my face?"

Billy looks up, tiger-like, watching Steve's reaction. Seems to delight in the fact that Steve's fucking speechless, *lost* at that. Billy is a fucking savage. A fucking devious bitch.

And Steve fucking shivers, but in a good way this time. He wants to come down Billy's throat *so bad*. He thought that since he'd already come once today that he'd be able to hold out during the hot tub, but like. That's not happening. He's going to *lose* it.

Billy must think he looks pretty fucking pathetic, all frustrated and desperate, because he decides Steve's been waiting long enough and puts his whole mouth on Steve's cock, sucking over the head so hard and wet, Steve almost sobs. It's like, these past few weeks have been such a fucking tension headache, and now Billy's taking Steve's cock to the back of his throat, accommodating most of the length, motivated by Patron, with little resistance.

"Oh my *God*. Billy, seriously. Fuck, *Billy*. "

That fucking works like a charm. Always does. Billy groans around Steve's dick, encouraged.

“Again,” he huffs as he comes up to breathe. “Say it. Talk about it.”

“You’re so good, Billy,” Steve says. He pulls Billy’s hair *hard* and gets a growl in response. “It’s so wet, it feels so good. Your *tongue*, Billy. Suck me off. Suck my cock.”

“Always so needy, you’re such a slut,” Billy says, coy. He rubs over it, where it’s pink swollen at the head, his fist so tight and wet with spit. “Suck your cock, *what?* Huh? You gotta beg. I’ll only keep goin’ if you do it. I like bein’ begged.”

Of course he fucking does.

“Suck my cock, *please*, Billy, okay? Please, please, suck me ‘til I come.”

Billy obliges, brings his hand into it now, too, strokes from the base in this circular motion that perfectly completes what his mouth can’t do, keeping up that delicious suction, it’s *filthy*.

And he’s not quite deepthroating, not gagging because most girls Steve’s gotten with can’t even take him the whole way, the whole time, even with practice, but. Billy. He’s so *good* at it. It’s like watching fucking glory hole porn or something, like, it doesn’t seem like real life, it’s so good that Steve’s detached himself from it. He can’t even *think*, doesn’t even know what the fuck is going on.

What Billy said the girls say about Billy’s tongue, that’s *true*. Steve doesn’t even want to picture where else he’d like to feel it or he’s going to actually pass out, and that would mean forfeiting Billy’s mouth.

“I’m not gonna last,” he hears himself say, which is clearly music to Billy’s fucking ears.

“Yeah? You gonna come?” Billy whispers, lapping the underside of Steve’s cock, down to his balls. All the way back. “Gonna blow your load for me, *princess?* In my mouth?”

That’s like an electric shock through Steve’s body, that nasty way Billy calls him names.

“Yeah, *yeah*, please don’t fucking stop, I’m gonna come.”

Billy rubs Steve’s cock faster, never stopping how he’s running his tongue over the fattened head and keeping eye contact and in between it all he’s like, “Look at you. You’re a fuckin’ wreck. You’re a goddamn mess. It’s like nobody’s ever given you head before.”

“I’m so close, fuck, Billy,” Steve whines, startling himself, because he’s not going to be able to hold off at all. Like, it’s *coming*. Billy feels *that* good, and the fact that they’re doing this together, after everything between them, it’s so gratifying. “Please, please, I’m gonna come.”

And like that, Billy just stops everything, edging Steve. Pulls off of Steve’s cock with an obscene *pop*. He looks evil, mouth shiny with saliva, eyes wild.

But like, Steve *tried* warning him. He’s too far gone, he’s *drunk* and the way Billy’s looking at him like he’s a piece of fucking meat, it’s not helping his situation. It’s making him think about Billy fucking him helpless into the bed he hasn’t routinely slept in since high school, in his parents’ house, like, it feels so taboo and exciting and new like it’s his first fucking time again, like earlier, and he just wants Billy to take control and choke him ‘til Steve physiologically *needs* to push his fist away, until he starts to need oxygen more than he needs Billy.

It happens embarrassingly fast. And it’s intense, humiliation makes it even better, the thought that Billy’s sizing him up and secretly amused at how long he lasted — like, that’s hot as *fuck*, for some reason.

Steve chokes on Billy’s name as the feeling courses through his body, cock pulsing and jumping on its own, come spurting out frenzied and premature, getting caught heavy in Billy’s curls, over his tongue and chin, dribbling onto the pavement between the V of his bare thighs. Steve holds tight to the roots of Billy’s hair through it.

When the aftershocks pass, Billy rises and pushes himself into Steve’s weak, flighty body, and he’s passing Steve’s come back to him, hot and thick and acidic. Steve tastes himself as they share it, is only a

little weirded out about it since he's coming down from the orgasm, but mostly just so *gone* for this stupid jerk who used to beat the shit out of him senior year and now they're trading blowjobs, and there's something so ironic and inevitable about it all.

"How do you know how to do that so good?" Because he can't help himself from asking. So competitive. What has Billy had that he hasn't?

Who's had Billy before him? He doesn't like that thought, it makes his stomach feel nauseous, nothing to do with Patron or lo mein or even last night's nips.

Billy shrugs. "It's a *dick*, Steve. You don't have to find the G-spot or anything, it's pretty straightforward, think I'm smart enough to put it together. Don't you use Pornhub?"

He talks so mean, but he makes up for it by kissing sweet, like he needs it more than Steve does, and Steve thinks that might be true.

Steve lets himself be tugged into the glowing cerulean waters. The heat bubbles over his skin, and he didn't realize just how cold the air had turned until now. Steam rises off the tub, a milky white cloud against the dark, covering over the dull shimmer of string lights.

Billy's left him already, ducked under the surface so there's a seaweed-like fluttering of hair undulating in the beams of light from the floor of the water. He bobs back up and his chest is dripping, glistening wet. He joins Steve on the bench by the jets. There are little droplets stuck to his long lashes and Steve likes them there.

And MGMT's "Electric Feel" comes on, which is Steve's *song*. Top five, for sure. Like, it's a throwback, which gets it major points, but it's also just a fucking *jam* in general, he could listen to it all day long and never stop feeling fucking high just from hearing it. Billy wades closer, slurs all sexy when he's like, "I love this *fucking* song."

"Yeah?" Steve can't even fucking hide the joy on his face.

"Yeah, who *doesn't*?"

"But this one's like, my favorite. And you said my music's gay."

“*You’re* kinda gay,” Billy says, pulling on Steve until he takes the hint and glides over in the water, easy, straddles Billy’s lap so he’s looking down at Billy and scraping his own knees on the rough bench.

Okay. That’s fair.

Steve can’t generate a comeback for that, so he rocks his hips against Billy’s, a test. Brushes his soft dick over Billy’s abs. Billy steadies his palms on Steve’s waist, forces him down a little so Steve can feel his thick cock pressing against his balls, his ass, rutting up into him.

“Maybe you’re right,” he says, which has them both smiling, laughing. *Stupid*.

It’s a pleasant background noise at this point, just the gurgling jets on Billy’s lower back and MGMT twinkling from the speakers, and Steve’s kind of ineptly trying to grind down onto Billy’s cock, but Billy sucks in a breath and words tumble out like he’s been trying to swallow them down, all, “Can I ask you something?”

“Yes? That sounds bad. I don’t know. Yes. I’m drunk.”

Billy looks him over. Careful. A word incongruent with the rest of Billy Hargrove.

“Are you afraid of me?”

Steve thinks of bruises and blood. Scars, concussions.

“Why would I be?” he says, because he’s curious, because he *isn’t* scared, but *should* he be? He can take a punch. Steve Harrington can take a fucking punch. He’s taken so many before.

“‘Cause I leave sometimes.”

And that’s like. Blunt as fuck, but a lot going on. Not where Steve anticipated this was going.

It’s too tense, too quiet, and Steve leans in to the crook of Billy’s neck, brushes his lips over the damp chlorine scent on the skin there and says, “It’s okay. You have to do what you have to do. I

understand.”

(Nancy would say that was “*mature.*”)

The pads of Billy’s fingers are running over his back, up his pale skin, tickle-soft as he lets himself be kissed. He groans, humps up into Steve. The water splashes around them, hot and soothing.

“I want you,” Billy whispers, ghosting over Steve’s neck and inciting a trickle of goosebumps.

“So *have* me,” says Steve, and they’re looking into each other’s eyes, magnetic and hypnotic.

“Not like that, though, I mean,” Billy shakes his head. His earring jingles when he does it. “I don’t mean sex. I mean. I want you.”

“You always say that,” Steve mutters, and he strokes his hands over Billy’s chest, down his muscles, down to his wrists where the elastic is wound tight, until Billy takes the hint and clasps their hands together. “But do you mean it for real?”

“God, so much. I told you already, I *told* you. How many times I gotta do that?”

Bowie’s “Heroes” strums on next. Like, that intro? It’s sunny and psychedelic and glowing and it makes Steve smile like a fucking idiot, so Billy grins back, biting on his pretty lower lip, arms wrapped tight around Steve’s waist as he pulls him in tight.

And Steve’s so *in love*.

Not necessarily with any one thing, but the combination, the equation of everything together, like. There’s so much, this vibe in the warm water, lit on tequila with *Billy*, their bodies so close they could almost be one. This classic, epic song like the end credits of a movie, the moon out and the dark house reflecting its light on window panes, it’s like. Some type of magic, and it fills Steve so full, he knows it’s getting closer and closer to sunrise and he’s getting sleepy but he never wants to let go of this, he’s *in love* with it.

He knows that’s a dangerous path to go down.

He's said "I love you" before, to Nancy, when he jumped the gun and got all crazy for her. And maybe that was only because she didn't want him, at least not really — Steve wants a fucking chase because girls were always too easy for him. But he's said those words before, and it was a mistake, and he might have subpar grades but this, he's *learning*, and one thing he knows for certain is that he can't risk rushing that again.

What he feels for Billy, it's strong, it's complex and turbulent and weighs him down because it's all he can fucking think about.

He can't fuck it up this time. Not when it actually matters. When it feels *really real*.

"Hey," Steve says. He feels like he's floating.

"Huh."

"I have something to ask you too, but you aren't gonna like it."

Billy makes a face, all scrunched up and condescending, like *try me*.

"I've been thinking about earlier, and I wanna *fuck*," Steve grits. He can't keep the sleep out of his voice, though. It's washing over him, pulling at his eyelids, tugging at the front of his head. He yawns, eyes pinching shut. "Wanna fuck *you*. This time. Would you let me?"

And Steve's heart's racing so fast he's *sure* Billy can hear it. Because like.

He just asked to *fuck Billy*.

Which they'd kind of agreed was a no-go.

But Billy's laughing, sexy and light, as if Steve's too drunk, which honestly, from the way the fairy lights toggle and converge and split behind Billy, Steve gleans that might be the case.

"Maybe," Billy says, strokes his dripping fingers through Steve's dry fluffy hair until it's wet, too. It feels good to have his head scratched like that, he ignores that it feels like Billy's ruffling his hair as if he were a little kid. "We'll have to see. What if we save that for later,

huh?”

“Okay,” he murmurs. That’s enough for Steve. “Okay. But you gotta *pinky promise*.”

“You gotta go to *sleep*, babe,” he says, but he takes Steve’s pinky under his own anyway. Pulls their hands toward his big lips. Kisses over Steve’s knuckles, three times.

Steve won’t remember these next details later, but Billy turns everything off, unplugs all the lights, locks all the doors like he fucking *lives* there, even if he’s tired and he has to spend extra time remembering where things are since high school. In the dark, in Steve’s bedroom that’s too big for just him, he rolls Steve out across the mattress, into the soft, fresh sheets and nest of pillows. When Billy joins him, they each leave dark halos seeping from their damp hair on the linen.

Maybe Billy spoons Steve until they fall asleep, but by morning he’ll roll over onto his stomach on the other side of the bed as if he *doesn’t cuddle* , so Steve will never know for sure.

Author's Note:

Finally on tumblr as the-copperkid, it'd make my day
if you asked ya girl something/sent me your thoughts
<3